

Jamieson

WESTERN  
CENTRAL AFRICA,  
A REVIEW

OF THE  
MEASURES ADOPTED FOR THE SUPPRESSION  
OF THE  
SLAVE TRADE FROM THENCE, AND OF THEIR EFFECTS  
ON THE  
INTERESTS OF BRITISH COMMERCE IN AFRICA;  
AND  
SUGGESTIONS  
FOR GIVING TO THE NATIVES OF THESE REGIONS  
THE MEANS OF  
COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE COAST,  
AND THENCE DIRECT TO EUROPE.  
WITH A SHORT NOTICE OF THE KINGDOM OF BENIN,  
IN WESTERN AFRICA.

BY  
ROBERT JAMIESON.

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L O N D O N :  
EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.  
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TO THE BRITISH PUBLIC,

MUCH misconception prevails both as to the measure of success which it is assumed, attended the operations of the British squadron on the African coasts, in its endeavours during a period of upwards of thirty years, to suppress the export of Ncgroes; and also with respect to the influence which those endeavours have exercised on the interests of British commerce in Africa.

The first and second chapters of the following paper will supply information on these points, while they are also needful preliminaries to the third chapter, in which the various attempts which have been made to open commercial intercourse with Central Africa by the Niger, are briefly traced; and suggestions are submitted for attempting this great purpose on other principles, and by other means than those which have hitherto been followed without approaching the accomplishment of the desired object: and for the clearer illustration of this chapter a map is appended, kindly supplied by Mr. ARROWSMITH.

The demand for Slave labour which has recently sprung up afresh from Cuba, and the promptness with which it has been met from the shores of Africa, give evidence that extended demand only is necessary to create a revival of Slave trading on a large scale. The Slaves shipped on the coasts of Africa are brought from the countries of the interior, and the only sure mode of giving to the traffic such a blow as shall be permanently felt, is to carry legitimate commerce into those regions, and so to stimulate the population to industrial pursuits on their own soil.

It may be argued that as far as the character of the African of the interior is known, his love of ease, and want of energy and enterprise, will be obstacles to the accomplishment of this great purpose. But it must be borne in mind, that his aptitude for agricultural industry has never yet been fairly tested: his energies are still to be drawn out and stimulated by the spurring influences of commercial pursuits; and the grand desideratum is to get these to bear on the regions of Central Africa.

It is not to be denied that there are difficulties to be overcome in the means suggested for the attainment of this object; but difficulties may often be overcome more easily than might have been apprehended before efforts have been put forth for overcoming them. The first great point in any undertaking is to make a commencement; and so important

do I esteem this that I should feel wanting in duty did I longer hesitate to submit views, which are the result of my experience and observation during a period of years in the direction of commerce to Western Africa.

The fourth chapter has been added to call notice to the kingdom of Benin, a country of great extent, comparatively of easy access, and having the Niger for some distance its eastern boundry, yet of which little is known.

I address myself to the British public rather than to the Government, because the enterprise proposed is one which must necessarily take years to mature, and would be more effectually carried out by an association of individuals zealous in the cause, than under Government direction. And, as the law now stands, opportunity is given for carrying out important purposes on this principle, without the danger of extended liability.

I would therefore beg leave to suggest that an association should be formed for the purpose proposed, and that the means for its prosecution be raised by a general subscription.

I have treated the subject purely commercially. It is, however, now universally acknowledged that commerce is the handmaid of civilization, and in this view it would be difficult to form a grander conception than that of the people

of this country uniting in one common effort towards elevating to the blessings of civilization, so large a portion of our fellow men sunk in deep ignorance and degradation in these remote regions of Africa.

ROBERT JAMIESON.

GLOUCESTER SQUARE,

*London, January, 1859.*

## CHAPTER I.

### THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE AND THE ATTEMPT AT ITS SUPPRESSION.

FOR some years previous to 1850-51, the export of Negroes from Africa was almost wholly to Brazil. The export to Cuba, at one time so large, had then all but ceased in consequence of the Cuban authorities, for reasons of their own, putting a stop to the import.\* In the years named the Government of Brazil determined to do so likewise, and this they effected by the adoption of stringent measures at the harbours and along the coasts of the Empire for preventing the landing of Negroes.

For upwards of thirty years preceding the above mentioned period, England had endeavoured to suppress the export from Africa, by means of treaties with foreign Powers, and by the maintenance of a squadron on the African coast to enforce the terms of these treaties;—with what results, will be seen by a perusal of the following pages, based mainly upon the evidence given before the select Committees of both Houses of Parliament, which sat on the Slave trade,—the Commons' in 1847-48, and the Lords' in 1849-50.

Accompanying the Reports of the Commons' Committee,

\* "Is it not the fact that the Government of Cuba has successfully prevented the Slave Trade at the present time in that Island? I believe the Government of Cuba has done so during the last two years. I am obliged to suppose so, because that is the only method of accounting for the great diminution in the importation of Slaves into Cuba."

*Lord Palmerston before the Commons' Committee, March, 1848.*

there is a memorandum of the estimated annual export of Slaves from Africa, from the year 1788 to the year 1847, which we adopt for reference, as the best statistical document of the kind extant. These exports are stated as follows:—

In	1788, . . .	100,000	yearly average.
From	1798 to 1805,	85,000	,,
	1805 to 1810,	85,000	,,
	1810 to 1815,	93,000	,,
	1815 to 1817,	106,000	,,
	1817 to 1819,	106,000	,,
	1819 to 1825,	103,000	,,
	1825 to 1830,	125,000	,,
	1830 to 1835,	78,500	,,
	1835 to 1840,	135,800	,,
	In 1840,	64,114	
	1841,	45,097	
	1842,	28,400	
	1843,	55,062	
	1844,	54,102	
	1845,	36,785	
	1846,	76,117	
	1847,	84,356	

The computed casualties after shipment are stated in the memorandum, but these it is not deemed necessary to quote, as the question before us is, whether the *export* was diminished by the measures adopted for its prevention.

The abolition of Slave-trading under the flag of England took place, it will be remembered, in the year 1807. At that period, as appears from the above figures, the export of Negroes was about 85,000 annually; that is, when the trade was a legal one to the whole world, and when England



herself had been largely engaged in it. It would seem as if England in thus taking the initiative had expected that her good example in 1807 would be followed by other nations; but this did not prove to be the case, and the trade continued to be freely prosecuted by them until the year 1817. Indeed, it will be seen that during the intervening ten years the export had risen from 85,000 to 106,000 annually. Disappointed, as might be supposed, with this issue, England then urged Spain and Portugal, the two Powers whose flags were most extensively used in the traffic, to enter into treaties for its suppression, to which, for a consideration, they assented: Spain for its suppression on the coasts of Africa generally, but Portugal on the coasts north of the equator only, and this on the understanding that the trade should remain legal to her flag on the coasts south of that line, so long as she might hold trans-atlantic possessions. In compensation for the loss resulting from these concessions, England paid to Spain £400,000, and to Portugal £300,000, besides cancelling a debt of £600,000 due by her to England. Neither of these treaties gave any power for the detention or capture of Slavers on the northern coasts *unless Slaves were actually on board*, and their inefficiency for the prevention of the export accordingly soon became manifest. Slave traders speedily discovered, that, in defiance of these treaties, they might sail their ships to those coasts, equipped in all respects for the purchase and conveyance over seas of Slaves, without being liable to molestation by British cruisers, well aware that so long as they had no Slaves on board they could not be touched. Thus prepared for the prosecution of the traffic on the northern coasts, (the Negroes of which are considered stronger and more suitable for heavy work than those of southern latitudes,) they sailed to and fro along the shores,

or anchored in rivers, watching for opportunities in the absence of our cruisers to embark their cargoes and be off to sea.

The Slaves, as is well known, were collected in barracoons by agents on shore, who communicated with the ships by concerted signals (at night by lights) and, when the desired opportunity presented itself, the Slaves in a few hours were put on board, and the vessel once out to sea, the danger of capture was small. In this way the export from the northern coasts continued, with great aggravation of suffering and increase of mortality among the Negroes—brought to the coast from distant parts of the interior—cooped up in barracoons while awaiting shipment—indifferently supplied with food and even water, and often all but famished previous to their shipment when embarkation was long protracted—then in hot haste huddled on board, not unfrequently through heavy surfs, and miserably stowed away in the hold in much greater numbers than the ship should carry or was supplied for. They were thus carried out to sea upon a long voyage, to put to the test the power of human endurance.

While the export was going on in this manner to a greater or less extent north of the equator, it was free to the flag of Portugal and to all who chose to use that flag, in latitudes south of the line; and this remained so from the time that the treaties of 1817 came into operation, until 1835, within which period the annual average export of Slaves which touched 125,000 in the five years ending in 1830, fell to 78,500 in the five years ending in 1835—a diminution which the issue of the next five years determines to have arisen from other causes than the prevention of the export by the squadron, as will presently be seen.

In 1835 Spain entered into a new treaty with England,

called an equipment article treaty, by which a mutual right of search of merchant vessels, and of detention if equipments used in Slave-trading were found on board, was conceded; adjudication being vested in Courts of mixed Commission; but Portugal did not enter into any new treaty, and the result was that Spanish Slave-traders simply substituted the Portuguese flag, under which the whole Slave trade of Africa was thence-forward prosecuted, down to 1840, during which period of five years the average annual export reached 135,800.

To check this growing evil, the British Government in 1839 assumed to itself extraordinary powers, and without regard to the will of Portugal passed an Act of Parliament, authorising the search and detention by our cruisers, of all vessels sailing under the Portuguese flag, *on all parts* of the African coasts. At this time, it must be kept in mind, the Slave trade was legal by treaty to the flag of Portugal *south* of the equator, and was being openly prosecuted under it—Slave traders having factories on shore, furnished with all manner of stores and merchandise suitable for its prosecution. It was now declared by a British Act of Parliament to be illegal, and the suddenness with which this measure was given effect to by our cruisers, without any previous intimation of it whatever, took the Slave traders altogether by surprise. Not only were their vessels seized, and detained for adjudication in our Admiralty Courts (in terms of the Act of Parliament), but armed men were landed to burn and destroy their factories, with all the stores &c. which they contained. A great blow was thus given to the export of Slaves, and, from the annual amount of 135,800 in the five years preceding 1840, the number now fell to 64,000 in that year, and to 28,400 in 1842.

The success, however, that thus attended this extraordinary assumption of power by England, and which cannot be regarded as legitimate, terminated upon the repeal of the Act of Parliament in the year 1842 when Portugal, at last yielding to the will of England, concluded an equipment article treaty, declaring Slave trade to be unlawful under her flag in *both* hemispheres.

Slave traders now turned their attention to the flags of nations whose treaties with England did not recognise the right of search, as was the case with those of France, and of the United States of America,—and they found the latter peculiarly suited to their purpose, notwithstanding that America was bound by treaty to keep a naval force upon the African coast, adequate to the prevention of the abuse of her flag in Slave trading. Stores and equipments were now shipped upon vessels carrying the American flag, and the trade was prosecuted in the manner described by Mr. STAVELY of the Foreign Office, in his evidence before the Committee of the House of Lords, in April, 1849, as follows:—

“They go out to the coast of Africa as American vessels, and so long as they wear the garb of American nationality our cruisers cannot meddle with them, but they have always a number of Spanish, Portuguese, or Brazilian passengers on board, and if they find a cargo of Slaves ready in the barracoons, they in a very few hours embark the Slaves. Then the American papers are put away, the American master and crew become passengers, and the Spanish, Portuguese, or Brazilian passengers assume the character of master and crew; the Portugese, Brazilian, or Spanish flag is hoisted, and away they go, taking the chance of making the run without being intercepted. In this way, these vessels

escape molestation, altogether, on the passage *to* Africa, unless they fall in with an American cruiser, and even she can only search; she cannot detain them, according to the American law, unless there be Slaves found on board. Then, on their return passage to Brazil when Slaves *are* on board, the change of flag saves them from this detention, and from capture by any but British cruisers; and the capture of vessels under the colours now adopted, namely Spanish, Portuguese, or Brazilian, renders them by treaty liable to confiscation only—the crew are not subject to any punishment. Were the capture made under the United States' flag, the crew would be subject to death—Slave trade being piracy by the American law.”

Be it observed, that the American law as thus stated by Mr. STAVELY, does not permit detention of merchant ships, even if found equipped for Slave trading after the manner described. The American cruisers can only detain, and send (to the U. S. Courts) for adjudication, vessels having Slaves actually on board, and it will be seen that, under the system practised, this never takes place. The maintenance by the United States of a squadron on the coast to watch her flag was thus reduced to a mere sham. Sir CHARLES HOTHAM, who commanded the British squadron, was asked by the Lords' Committee, in May, 1849, “Did the American squadron interfere in any way in the suppression of the Slave trade?” to which he replied, “Only in one instance, to the best of my recollection, and for so interfering the officer got into great difficulty with his Government. He watched and captured a ship that evidently intended to take a cargo of Negroes across,—she was at that time of course under the American flag,—he sent her to New York. It was found by the commander that the trial was nearly concluded, and

was going entirely against him, when he arrived at the port of New York, made his appearance in Court, and obtained a milder sentence, but not more than that. She was fitted for shipping Slaves—the master avowed his intention of shipping Slaves—and she had on board the most notorious Slave dealer on the coast.”

The French flag too, it is understood, assisted in the traffic to a minor extent; and the flag of Sardinia was likewise available for it, because, although the right of search and detention was conceded in the treaty with that power, the right of trial of vessels captured was reserved to Sardinian Courts only. Sir CHARLES HOTHAM, on being asked, “Why were you prevented from capturing Slavers under the Sardinian flag?” replied, “There were two instances of captured vessels being sent to Genoa and being released, although the evidence was entirely in favor of the captors. After that, our officers became of course naturally distrustful, and unless the case was a very glaring one (which never occurred), they would not interfere with a Sardinian vessel.”

Under these circumstances the export of Slaves revived, and the numbers increased from 28,400 in 1842, to 55,062 in 1843, and to 84,350 in 1847. The memorandum of exports accompanying the Report of the Commons' Committee extends no further than 1847, but it is well known that the exports of 1848 and 1849 were upon a still larger scale, directed almost wholly to Brazil.

It is not for us to discuss the merits or demerits of the policy which led our Government to domineer over Brazil in respect of the Slave trade in 1850, nor to enquire into the motives which led the Government of that Empire to prohibit further importations of Negroes into it, causing as a natural consequence a suspension *pro tanto* of the exports

from Africa, which continues to this day. It suffices that we have given a brief outline of the history of the attempt to suppress the export of Negroes from Africa *by forcible means* on the African coasts, and have shown that at the end of thirty years' exertion for this object, the annual export, that is in 1847-48-49, was as large as the annual average export during the period from 1798 to 1805, when Slave trading was open to all the nations of the world, and England herself actively engaged in it. And this with a large number of ships of war upon the coasts of Africa,—many of them steamers, and in a higher state of efficiency than at any former time. And what have been the results of this fruitless crusade? To England, a great sacrifice of valuable life in fleets cruizing off unhealthy shores, and an expenditure of millions of the public money: and to Africa, a fearful aggravation of the sufferings and increase in the mortality, of her miserable serfs before and after embarkation!

## CHAPTER II.

### THE INFLUENCES OF SLAVE TRADE SUPPRESSION TREATIES ON THE INTERESTS OF BRITISH COMMERCE IN AFRICA.

IN pointing out the effects which the measures adopted in attempting to suppress the export of Negroes from Africa have had on the interests of British commerce, we shall begin with that which has been considered to be, of all others, the most important as a means of suppression,—the Equipment Article Treaties with foreign powers.

The articles enumerated in those treaties, as equipments affording proof of an intention to prosecute Slave trading, are so many, that no ship engaged in lawful commerce can be without a greater or less number of them. Palm oil trading ships for instance, have *of necessity* to carry *many* of those articles either in themselves proscribed or proscribed in regard to quantities. The trade cannot be prosecuted otherwise. In consequence of this, the owners of British ships in that trade give bond to the custom house authorities, that these articles shall not be used for Slave trading purposes; and certificates to this effect from H. M. customs are respected by commanders of our own ships of war on the African coasts, but they are not so by the commanders of the ships of war of the foreign powers who have concluded equipment article treaties with us. Such documents are not recognized as legal evidence by these commanders, who have power by the terms of the treaty to detain the ships, and



send them for trial by mixed Courts of Commission. Condemnation and confiscation are in such a case certain, seeing it is indisputable that many of the proscribed articles were on board; and, the judgment pronounced by the mixed Court being final, there is no appeal or means of redress of any kind.

Virtually, therefore, the whole British palm oil trade of Africa, amounting in 1857 to 42,720 tons, is carried on by sufferance of the foreign powers with whom we have such treaties. As yet no evil has resulted from this state of things, excepting on the coast south of the line, where Portugal has colonial possessions, and her men of war are fallen in with. On that coast a promising British commerce was in course of development, when Slave trading there was legal under the Portuguese flag; but no sooner did Portugal make the traffic unlawful, by entering into the equipment article treaty before spoken of, than the annoyance to our merchantmen from search and detention by Portuguese cruisers became intolerable; resulting in the seizure, trial, and final condemnation of a ship from Liverpool, and causing the withdrawal of some of the principal merchants engaged in this, until then, unmolested and rising trade. This vessel, the *Lady Sale*, had been dispatched from Liverpool by a house of the highest respectability to prosecute the palm oil trade on the Zaire or Congo river, but was obliged to leave it from not meeting with the success expected. At the time of her capture, she had on board a greater quantity of water than is allowed by equipment article treaties, the principal part of which had been taken in on the Congo as ballast, and was quite unfit for human use, being in palm oil casks. She had also more rice than is allowed by these treaties; this article having been laid in for the food of Kroomen who were engaged upon the coast,

as is usual, in order to save the European crew of the ship from the heavy part of the work of the palm oil trade. She had also on board an iron boiler or large pot, which was absolutely necessary for testing the qualities of the oil, that being done by boiling. These articles form part of those proscribed, and the fact of their having been found on board was held to be proof of an intention to prosecute Slave trading, and was the cause of the ship's condemnation.

Of course this put an end to any further palm oil trading on the Congo, but the application of those treaties to British shipping extends equally to all parts of the African coasts, north and south. The having on board *any one* of the proscribed articles would justify the condemnation and confiscation of a ship, and thereby the owner is placed in this position;—He is, by the sentence of the court, held to have entered upon an illegal voyage—his policies of insurance become thereby void—and the ship and cargo are irretrievably lost to him. The ship above alluded to was, it is true, after a length of time and the loss of a voyage, restored; but only as an act of grace. The fairness of the capture and trial, and the soundness of the judgment pronounced, according to the text of the treaty, were maintained by the Portuguese authorities, and could not be questioned by those of England. What a serious hindrance is thus presented to the spread of British commerce on the southern coasts, and in what jeopardy is the whole British palm oil trade with Africa placed, by treaties of our own formation, and by ourselves *urged* upon foreign Powers!

Another class of treaties considered to be of great importance as a means of Slave trade suppression, but which in their operation are inimical to the spread of British commerce in Africa, are those entered into with native kings and chiefs

for the relinquishment of Slave dealing,—or, more properly speaking, for the relinquishment of the practice of selling Slaves for exportation. A theory is got up and propounded to them by the officers of the squadron, to the effect that Slave trade and lawful commerce cannot co-exist,—that the one must be relinquished before the other can be formed,—and that if treaties with England be entered into whereby Slave trading shall be relinquished, lawful commerce will come in and compensate for the loss. The poor ignorant men give credence to this doctrine, and, dazzled by the receipt of presents as from the Queen of England, put their marks to papers the nature of which they cannot be supposed to comprehend. Dealing in Slaves is suspended, and the immediate advent of the promised lawful commerce is anticipated as a necessary consequence; but it does not come,—for commerce, as every sensible man knows, cannot be formed in a day, or in a year. Disappointment and a return to Slave selling are the natural consequences. This, however, is an infringement of the treaty, and the issue is illustrated by what took place, under such circumstances, with the Chiefs on the river Gallinas. A fleet of British men of war assembled at its mouth, and on the 3rd February, 1849, landed 300 armed men, who burned to the ground, towns, villages, and stores, with all the property in them, to the distance of about twenty miles up its banks. Lawful commerce is of slow growth, and can only take root where there is continuous mutual friendliness and good faith; but here the chiefs are deceived, and with their people are made our enemies.

But the most grievous part of the matter, is, that the theory on which those treaties is based, namely, that lawful commerce cannot co-exist with Slave trade, is fallacious.

The doctrine, nevertheless, is preached up by certain parties at home, and is apt to impress the public mind with the idea that the commerce which exists with Africa must have risen up in localities where no Slave trading was prosecuted, or where it had first been put down by the squadron. We shall prove that the theory and this deduction from it are alike erroneous.

This is so far done by what has already been stated, namely, that while the Slave trade was legal to the Portuguese flag on the south coasts of Africa, and was prosecuted without let or hindrance under it, lawful commerce was at the same time prosecuted there. And further, the evidence of Capt. MATSON who commanded a ship of the squadron when the onslaught was made upon the traffic on these coasts in 1840-41-42, may be quoted as to the fact:—

“At Ambriz,” said he, to the Commons’ Committee, “when the five Slave factories were burned, there were five or six or seven other factories that were legal factories,—English, American, German,—they were not touched—they were all full of goods; the same trade was going on—the Slave trade in one factory, and legal trade in the other.”

But the history of the rise and progress of the palm oil trade now flourishing in the Bight of Biafra on the north coast, furnishes very interesting and satisfactory proof on the question. This commerce dates its commencement so early as from the time when Slave trade was legally prosecuted by subjects of England. The Supercargoes of ships from Liverpool, while lying in the Bight for the purchase of their Slave cargoes, bought also such palm oil as was offered (in very small quantities) for sale; the article, so far as it went, being useful as ballast on the voyage to the West

Indies, as well as remunerative when forwarded thence for sale at Liverpool.

Upon the abolition of Slave trading by England, this incipient commerce—an off-shoot as it were of the Slave trade—was followed up by the merchants of Liverpool. From custom house and other documents, it is estimated that the palm oil received from the Bight of Biafra at that port in the year 1806 was 150 tons, in 1809 upwards of 600 tons, in 1819 upwards of 3000 tons, in 1829 upwards of 8000 tons, and in 1839 it was 13,600 tons, giving a value, at the then price of the oil, of nearly half a million sterling. During the whole of this period the Slave trade was prosecuted in the Bight, the Slaves and the palm oil being both supplied under the auspices of the same kings and chiefs.

The enormous extent to which Slave traffic is represented as having been carried in 1820-21, appears from a despatch of Sir CHARLES MAC CARTHY, presented to Parliament in 1822, along with other papers relating to Slave trade, namely, that “during the nine months from October, 1820 to July, 1821, 190 cargoes of Slaves were taken out of the river Bonny, and 162 out of the Old Calabar.” This was quoted by Capt. DENMAN, in his evidence before the Lords’ Committee of 1849-50. Before the same Committee, Mr. DAWSON, a merchant of Liverpool prosecuting the palm oil trade in the Bight of Biafra, stated, that “in 1830 he had seen as many as 17 Slavers in the river Bonny at one time, some of them very large ships.” And Capt. DENMAN further stated, that when he was on the coast in 1834-35, “the Bight of Biafra was the great focus of Slave traffic, north of the equator.”

By 1839, however, the export of Slaves from the Bight had ceased, leaving in its place a trade in palm oil, which by

that time had expanded (as has been already stated) to 13,600 tons. At the end of the next ten years, namely, in 1849, the import from thence into Liverpool was estimated at upwards of 15,700 tons. In one of these years however, 1845, it touched 18,040 tons, and, assuming this to have been the highest point of the import for that period, the remarkable fact is brought out, that during those ten years, when the Bight was free from Slave trading, the palm oil trade did not progress in so great a ratio, as it had done in the ten years preceding, when Slave trading was actively prosecuted.

What then becomes of this theory, and of what value are the treaties based upon it? The theory, we submit, has been proved to be utterly erroneous; and this being the case, what shall we say of the treaties? It is true that witnesses have come before the Parliamentary Committees, who, without having given to the question sufficient consideration, or having bestowed upon it due enquiry, have stated it as their opinion that lawful commerce cannot exist in contact with Slave trading. But the preceding pages contain ample evidence not only that the contrary was the fact at Ambriz and elsewhere on the south coast; but that, for thirty years from its rise, the palm oil trade of the Bight of Biafra on the north coast flourished in the midst of the traffic: and we may add this gratifying and important fact, was in the end the means of banishing it, as we trust and believe for ever, from the Bight.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE EXTENSION OF COMMERCIAL INTERCOURSE TO THE INTERIOR OF WESTERN AFRICA.

THE fallacy of the doctrine that lawful commerce cannot exist in contact with the Slave trade, and the injurious effects which the measures based upon such a doctrine have had upon the interests of British commerce with Africa being thus exposed, the way is so far clear for considering the best means of extending commercial intercourse into the regions of Central Africa, watered by the river Niger and its confluent the Chadda. And if we examine into the causes which have led to the advancement of the palm oil trade in the Bight of Biafra, we shall find data that may enable us to arrive at the best mode of procedure for attaining the desired object.

But first, let us show the progress which has been made by that trade down to the present time. We have, in the preceding pages, traced it from its commencement in 1806, to the year 1849, during which period the annual export of oil rose from 150 tons to 15,700 tons, and we have now to state that it continued to increase in the years which followed, and that in the year 1857 it amounted to 26,050 tons, landed at the port of Liverpool alone;\* to which if we add the

\* The oil imported from the Bight into Liverpool during the past year (1858) through the ordinary channel (namely, in merchant shipping), amounted to 20,300 tons; besides which, 3600 tons were imported in the African mail steamers which now run to Liverpool. It is believed

comparatively small quantity of 2500 tons shipped to other ports, the exports from the Bight may be stated at two thirds of the total import of palm oil from Africa to Great Britain during that year, as given in the Board of Trade returns, namely, 42,720 tons.

And now with respect to the causes which have led to this wonderful advancement; one, and a significantly important one was, that the trade in its first and more tender stages had the good fortune *to be let alone*. There was no jarring by interference with the Slave trade as it then existed in the Bight, or with the habits, customs, and prejudices of the people; and before the chiefs were invited to enter into treaties with England, Slave trading had ceased. Another cause was, that the trade was conducted directly under the auspices of the kings and chiefs, who found themselves and their people benefited by it, and therefore encouraged its promotion. And a third and most important cause was, that the trade was an open one on equal terms to all who chose to engage in it, and by this means the benefit of competition, regulating values in the interchange of commodities according to supply and demand, was kept up; the natives obtained full value for their oil in barter for the merchandise they were in want of, and thus their industry was stimulated and maintained. For the present the palm oil trade absorbs all the available labour of the Bight; but there can be no doubt, that if labourers were plentiful, other tropical products suitable for the purposes of commerce would be cultivated and prepared.

If, then, the same elements were brought to bear upon that a large portion of this was from the Bight of Biafra; still there is a falling off for the year as compared with 1857, which is attributed to local troubles at Bonny, that for a time suspended the trade.



the promotion of commerce with Central Africa, there can be little question of the eventual issue being as prosperous there, as it has proved in the Bight of Biafra. The first of these elements is in our own hands: as far as our intercourse with those regions has hitherto gone, kings, chiefs, and people, have shown the greatest desire to be friendly, and to become connected with us in commerce; and why should not this be reciprocated by us, without any intermeddling with their internal affairs? The second referred to, was the direct encouragement which the kings and chiefs in the Bight of Biafra gave to the promotion of industry among their people, by their being themselves personally engaged in trade. This would soon be developed in Central Africa also. The benefits which would accrue to both chiefs and people from such a course would very speedily be seen and appreciated.

And in regard to the third and most important element—wholesome competition—how is that to be brought to bear? How is the stimulus to industry, arising from general supply and demand, to be brought into operation in regions so distant and difficult of approach? The experience of the past gives proof that this must be attained by other means than the expensive one hitherto pursued, of navigating the rivers by steam vessels.

It is now a quarter of a century since the first attempt to open commerce with those regions in this way was made, and failed of success. This was a commercial expedition, consisting of *two* steamers, equipped and dispatched from Liverpool, in 1832-33, by an association of merchants, and conducted by Messrs. LAIRD, OLDFIELD, and others. The Niger was ascended as high as to the town of Rabbah, some 500 miles from the coast, and the Chadda was also ascended to some distance; but the heavy expenditure proved ruinous to the enterprise, and its further prosecution was abandoned.

Again it is nearly twenty years since the second attempt was made by the less expensive means of *one* steamer,—the *Ethiope*, built by the writer for the purpose, who appointed Mr. BECROFT to the command, and to the conducting of the adventure, in conjunction with his surgeons Messrs. KING and MOFFAT. The Niger was in this instance navigated to a point above Rabbah, some 50 miles below the town of Busah, where it is supposed the celebrated traveller MUNGO PARK perished; here further progress was stopped by strong rapids which could not be passed by a vessel of the *Ethiope's* steam power (30 horses). This voyage also was seriously damaged by the heavy expenditure of the steamer. Nevertheless, the proceeds of the produce obtained were to such an amount, as gave a ground of hope that by a continuous series of such ascents, the trade transacted might gradually increase, so as eventually to defray expenditure, and afford remuneration.

The government expedition to the Niger of 1841-42, next followed, consisting of three steamers,—the *Albert*, *Wilberforce*, and *Soudan*,—sent out professedly for the advancement of commerce and agriculture in Central Africa, but which, in the opinion of merchants then engaged in trade to Africa, was not likely to accomplish that object,—of which more as we proceed. The disastrous results of this expedition are before the world, and it will always be a source of satisfaction to the writer that he gave timely warning of the probable consequences; and, that this being unheeded, he gave such instructions to Capt. BECROFT (who was still on the coast in command of the *Ethiope*) as enabled him to render important succour to the *Albert* when in distress up the Niger.

Again, after the lapse of some years, a further experiment to form commercial intercourse by steam navigation on the Niger, was attempted under the direction of the writer :

subscriptions having been entered into by a number of mercantile men, and others not connected with commerce, of London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow, to form a guarantee fund against expenses and possible results, the Niger was again ascended to Rabbah by the *Ethiope*, commanded as before by Capt. BECROFT, and with Mr. KING as surgeon and supercargo; but the adventure commercially fell so far short of expectation, and was attended by so many adverse contingencies, that further prosecution of the experiment was relinquished.

Since then, the Chadda, the confluent of the Niger, has been successfully explored by Dr. BAIKIE, in the *Pleiad* steamer, under the auspices of government, and the direction of Mr. MACGREGOR LAIRD; and that gentleman has just returned to the coast from an ascent of the Niger under the same auspices and direction. But these missions, supported by pecuniary grants from government, must be looked upon, more as exploratory and scientific than commercial. Out of them, however, a project has arisen for the prosecution of trade upon the river by a Joint Stock Company, of which notice will be taken as we proceed. At present it is our purpose to show the difficulties that stand in the way of the formation of general commerce with Central Africa by steam navigation upon the Niger,—difficulties which have not hitherto been sufficiently considered.

In the first place, the danger to life in passing the unhealthy swamps of the Delta, although lessened by the employment of Africans for ships' crews, and by the use of quinine and other precautionary measures, must always be a great barrier to the promotion of general commerce with the interior by that channel.

In the next place, the cost of steam vessels and the heavy

expenditure attending their navigation to, and in, such remote regions, (not to speak of the heavy responsibilities arising from casualties,) inevitably enhance the cost of the merchandize to be bartered for produce in Central Africa, to a degree such as the limited extent of trade cannot bear. And even if produce were obtainable in much larger quantity, it would require to be purchaseable at very *low prices*, in order to defray such heavy expenditure, not to say a word of remuneration; and in such a case no encouragement would be given to call out and stimulate native industry. Commerce must be remunerative to all parties engaged in it, to be lasting,—to be lasting it must become general,—and must be general to become competitive, and there is no prospect of commerce attaining and passing through those stages in Central Africa by means of steam navigation on its waters.

The project of a Joint Stock Company above alluded to, carries with it in its details the appearance of partially overcoming these difficulties, inasmuch as the heavy expenditure of steamers would, in some measure, be lessened by what is proposed, namely, to plant trading stations at various parts of the rivers in the interior, for the collection of produce in barter with the natives; those stations to be visited periodically by a steam vessel with flat bottomed launches in tow, bearing supplies of fresh merchandize, and conveying to the coast in return the produce collected. This mode of prosecuting the trade is now being followed, aided by annual subsidies from government; and the object of the scheme projected is to extend existing operations by the formation of a Joint Stock Company with limited liability. Of course the ground-work of this project is a desire to advance commercial intercourse in those quarters, but it is not difficult to see that while the commerce transacted might, with govern-

ment aid, be remunerative to those conducting it, its ostensible object would not be accomplished. For a commercial company with limited liability on the one hand, and support from grants of the public money on the other, would form a monopoly to the utter exclusion of general supply and demand. Though it might be remunerative to the English shareholders it would be devoid of that essential element for the development of native industrial resources,—competition,—and instead of being a means towards the expansion of general commerce with Central Africa, would retard it.

Nor would the purposes intended to have been carried out by the government expedition before referred to, have had any other result, supposing that the river fever had not put a stop to the enterprise, by causing a prompt return of the steamers to the coast. Those purposes were mainly—to make treaties with the kings and chiefs of the interior, such as have already been alluded to, for the suppression of dealing in Slaves; and to enter into arrangements for the purchase of territory on which to plant a British settlement, professedly to initiate the population of the interior in the culture and preparation of productions suitable for exchange in commerce.

Only two such treaties were concluded,—one with the chief of Eboe, the first considerable place come to in ascending the Niger, just above the Delta,—the other with the chief of Iddah, the next considerable place; and an incident which occurred a few days after the signing of the latter, strikingly developed their mischievous practical operations.

The circumstances (abridged from *Thomson and Allens'* published narrative of the expedition) were shortly these: Capt. TROTTER of the steamer *Albert*, in ascending the river, fell in with a large canoe descending, belonging to the chief

of Muyé, and in charge of his son. It contained three Slaves, a male and two females, three horses, and other property, purchased at the market of Egga. "As Muyé is in the territory of the chief of Iddah, the canoe, Slaves, horses, &c., were condemnable by virtue of the treaty with him, which prohibited him, or his subjects, from dealing in Slaves out of his own dominions." The canoe was accordingly detained, and the young man in charge of it put upon a formal trial; the issue of which was this,—that, taking the shortness of the time that had elapsed for the promulgation of the treaty, and other matters, into consideration,—the destruction of the canoe and the seizure of the property in it should not be enforced, but the Slaves were declared to be free and were carried to the coast, and the young man was assured that the terms of the treaty would be strictly acted upon in future.

Now, supposing that a number of such treaties had been concluded with the kings and chiefs of the interior upon the Niger, and that it was possible by war steamers of light draft of water, or by other means, (forts on the river were spoken of,) to keep up surveillance for their enforcement,—would not this officious intermeddling, by strangers, in the internal affairs of a country, exasperate the kings, chiefs, and people, and make them enemies instead of friends, and thus interrupt at the very outset the formation of that commercial intercourse with them which it was sought to establish and cultivate?

Then, with respect to a settlement for the purpose of initiation in the culture of exchangeable products, the experiment had been tried and had signally failed, long before, at Sierra Leone. This settlement was founded in 1792, expressly "as an experiment for substituting a commerce in

the natural productions of the soil, for that in the bodies of its inhabitants;" and what, may the reader suppose, is the annual amount of productions exported from Sierra Leone at the present time, after millions of English money have been expended upon it? According to the latest official report of its Governor, published in the Blue book of the colonies for the information of Parliament,\*namely, that for 1856, the value of produce exported to England, the United States, and France,—that is to say the total export from the colony, is estimated at £153,347,—not more than the value of produce annually passing through the hands of any second or third rate commercial house engaged in trade with India, China, or America. The estimated value of the imports for the year is also given, and corresponds to the miserable amount of the exports, the total from all parts being £149,357. The cause of this is, that the chiefs and people of the surrounding territories declined the proffered tutelage, and, to this day, either hold themselves aloof from the colony, or are in hostility to it; the results, mainly, of jarrings caused by treaties; whilst the paltry amount of commerce which exists in the colony itself, has passed into the hands of a few European residents, and has become a species of small monopoly, to the exclusion of general supply and demand. And if such be the state of things at a British settlement, situated on the coast, and open to communication by sea with all the world, after having been in our possession for nearly three quarters of a century, what was to be expected from one planted in the interior of Africa, which could not be approached except by the navigation by steam of a river at its season of flood, through some 100 miles of pestilential swamps!

How, then, is competitive supply and demand to be

brought to bear upon commerce with Central Africa? It must, it is contended, be done, by the people of those regions taking a principal hand personally in the work. They must themselves bring their produce to a market on the coast, where they will obtain much better prices for it than could possibly be afforded where a heavy steam ship expenditure had been incurred; and it so happens that a peculiar characteristic of the African is favourable to this. It is well known that he makes little calculation of the value of time, and will go a great distance to find a good market for any produce he has to sell, as well as to obtain the merchandise he is want of. He is, however, ignorant of his opportunities in this respect, and must be shown them. The Niger is navigable, by canoes of large size, from the far westward, and the Chadda from the far eastward. These rivers form a confluence at a distance of about 250 miles from the coast, flow on to "Iddah," a town finely situated about 50 miles lower down, and passing "Kiri market," about 60 miles further on, and "Eboe" some 40 to 50 miles more, find their way to the sea by the outlets of the Niger. Here a barrier presents itself to the further progress of the journey from the interior, by the fact of those outlets flowing through the unhealthy, swampy land of the Delta, inhabited by a barbarous and turbulent population. And even if the coast were reached in safety, there is no market for the sale of produce, except at the town of Bonny, which is situated on the Delta and is notorious for its unhealthiness.

The natives of the interior, on the Niger and Chadda, are thus debarred from communication with the coast by this route, and are not aware that it can be reached by another discovered some years since in the exploration of the Old Calabar river. Capt. BECROFT, after making his first ascent



of the Niger in the steamer *Ethiope*, was instructed by the writer to ascend the Old Calabar river, in the hope that a connection might be discovered between it and the river Chadda. In doing so he found that what was laid down on the maps as the Old Calabar river, is not a river but an estuary, into which a river flows called the "Cross river," but which in reality is the "Old Calabar," and which he navigated for some 250 miles, when further ascent was stopped by rapids too strong to be stemmed by a steamer of the *Ethiope's* power. The river up to this point had a good depth of water, and it was ascertained that this was also the case immediately above the rapids. The banks were cultivated, the climate was good, and chiefs and people were exceedingly friendly. No connection with the Chadda was discovered; but the exploration as traced by Mr. ARROWSMITH in the map appended shows, that the town of "Ikrikok" immediately above the estuary of the Old Calabar, is distant in a straight line from "Kiri market" on the Niger only 118 English miles. This market is put down on the map "Kiri," from the explorations of Messrs. LAIRD and OLDFIELD. But by Capt. BECROFT and his party it is called "Egara." It is held every ten days, and attended by canoes from Iddah and other places up the river, and from Eboe and other places below. The former bring Slaves, Ivory, Tobacco, Goats, Corn, &c., which are exchanged for Salt, Cloth, Gunpowder, Earthenware, &c., brought by the latter. As many as 34 large canoes have been counted passing to this market in one day.

The distance, then, between the two rivers, at Ikrikok and Kiri respectively, being 118 English miles, the transit across this comparatively short district of country is the only bar to the opening up to Central Africa of a highway to the sea, and a market of general supply and demand in the estu-

ary of the Old Calabar, in the Bight of Biafra, where there is a safe and commodious anchorage, and where British and other trading ships are constantly arriving and departing, keeping up that competition which has been so instrumental in promoting the remarkable prosperity of the Bight. This spirit of competition, indeed, has become almost excessive of late years at Old Calabar; but though it may prove a misfortune for the time being to the Europeans engaged in the trade, it carries along with it its own cure; and, that competition is the soul of commerce is indisputable—a stimulus without which no trade can long flourish.

If, therefore, a line of communication were established for the short distance in question, so as to enable native traders from the interior to avail themselves of such a market, a prospect would be presented for a rising commercial intercourse with Central Africa which at present is hopelessly distant. Produce could then be sold and merchandise in return obtained at such values as would stimulate and sustain native industry as well as compensate for the journey, which is rendered comparatively easy by the aid of the extensive ranges of water conveyance furnished by the Niger and Chadha.

Some geographers are of opinion that a creek communication exists between the rivers Niger and Old Calabar; but failing this, a road—it might be too much in the first instance to speak of a canal—may be formed to connect them. The expense of such an undertaking would be unworthy of consideration compared with the importance of opening to the vast population of Central Africa, an easy and safe transit to a competitive market, and this at a point on the coast only a few weeks' sail from Europe, with steam-packets from England plying to it monthly. MUNGO PARK considered that his mis-

sion to the Niger possessed an importance only second to that of COLUMBUS in search of a new world, anticipating that, as the result of his investigations, a dark and almost unknown quarter of the globe would be opened up to the benefits of free intercourse with civilised nations. And here is an opportunity for consummating the noble purpose for which he sacrificed his valuable life, bequeathing, as it were, to his country the honour of carrying it into effect.

In justice to the memory of this enterprising philanthropist, as well as out of regard for the interests of Africa, this mode of communication with the interior should be investigated, and its practicability put to the test. This once established, a new era would dawn on those parts of Africa. And it would almost seem, as if, under Providence, things were in a state of preparation for this. Old Calabar has now for half a century been in direct commercial connection with England: the kings and chiefs since Slave trading ceased in that river have joined in treaties with England, the terms of which they have faithfully adhered to; and it is now thirteen years since christian missionaries settled amongst them, at their own special invitation — missionaries of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland — both clergymen and female teachers, who have been labouring in the good work of improving the adult population, and in educating the youth of both sexes; who, it is to be hoped under such training, are growing up in the blessings of christian knowledge and civilisation. The native language has been acquired and grammatically arranged; and by means of a printing press not only elementary books for the use of the schools, but considerable portions of the bible have been printed for circulation, in that language.

As before stated, in any intercourse we have as yet had

with Central Africa, kings, chiefs, and people have shown the most friendly disposition, and the greatest desire to be connected with us in commerce. Nothing could exceed the kind manner in which Capt. BECROFT and his surgeons were received and treated by the king or chief of Rabbah,—Osman or Osiman,—while the *Ethiope* lay at anchor off that city for nearly a fortnight, in 1840, the city being then in high prosperity; or again, in the year 1845, by Massaba this chief's brother at Laddeh, a town inland from Si-wah, (its port on the river,) some distance below Rabbah. Rabbah was now in ruins; burnt to the ground and abandoned by its king or chief; the issue of a quarrel which had arisen between the two brothers; who, however, according to intelligence recently transmitted from the river by Dr. BAIKIE, have been reconciled, and are again living in friendship.

These personages who are of high birth, are supposed to be next in consideration to the sultan of Sakatu; and from what has above been stated of the strong desire manifested by them for trade, we should approach them with every prospect of their receiving and acting with eagerness upon suggestions for its promotion. While as showing the commercial capabilities of the districts of country between Iddah and Rabbah, we give the following extract from a paper drawn up by Mr. KING, surgeon of the *Ethiope*, on his return from the ascent of the Niger in 1845.

“Ivory, vegetable tallow, and peppers, formed the principal articles of barter. The two latter we conceive might be obtained to an unlimited extent, were the natives assured of a regular demand for them. Besides these, indigo might also become a considerable article of trade. This plant grows everywhere along the banks of the river; and, on our ride to Laddeh, we saw small fields of it remarkably clean

looking and carefully thinned, with plantain trees interspersed for the purpose of shading it. Cotton wool is also a production of the country, and is spun and woven into cloths, for the dress of the people, at all the principal towns we visited. Indian corn—of which there are more varieties than one—and millet, appear to be very plentiful. Tale-seed, of similar properties to linseed, and which we understand is an article of export from the east coast of Africa to England, is likewise very abundant. Ground-nuts are plentiful, as is also another species of earth-nut, called *sweet nut* by our people who were very fond of them. A small kidney-shaped bean, not unlike the French haricot bean, is also very common. We have likewise seen dates, and an oil prepared from their kernels, but dark looking and burnt. We met with a similar oil at Eboe and Iddah, prepared from the *kernels* of the common *palm oil nut*, and which answered exceedingly well the purposes of our engineer, for whose use it was purchased. Other oils in small quantities are also made by the natives, but of an animal kind; the principal of which is that prepared from the fat of the *lamantine*, or sea-cow of the Niger. This last is chiefly used as an unguent by the women. Dye-woods, gums, and bees-wax, would in all probability be found in quantity; and leopard and bullock skins might also be turned to advantage in trade.

“It will thus be seen, that if the commercial resources of this district upon the Niger were drawn out, there would be no want of exchangeable productions, to uphold a lasting intercourse with Europe.”\*

\* For the reader who may desire to see some account of the appearance and character of the Niger, an abridgement of Mr. KING's paper, from which the above extracts are taken, is given as an appendix. Although written several years ago, it is the latest account of the Niger above its confluent the Chadda yet extant.

It may be added, that "vegetable tallow" is an oil extracted from the nut of the shea tree, which hardens and takes the appearance of animal tallow. It is an article which could at once be made available in commerce, and as will be seen from the above, according to Mr. KING's opinion, in unlimited quantity. During the few days the steamer lay at anchor off the village of Si-wah, the port of Laddeh before spoken of, the natives prepared ten tons of this oil, which was purchased; and it commanded a higher price in England than palm oil.

It will also be seen from the above that at all the principal towns of the interior, Cotton Wool is spun and woven into cloths for native use. Many of these cloths are of excellent quality, proving the quality of the staple itself. The importance to England of the opening up of new sources whence increased supplies of this article might be procured, is admitted on all hands. Perhaps it would be difficult to exaggerate its importance. And may it not also with reason be said, that to have a market opened up for this one item of her produce, almost to any extent to which she could supply it, must be of equal, if not greater, importance to Africa? There are vast regions there ready for being brought under cotton cultivation, with a climate well adapted to its production. A market alone is wanting to stimulate that production. And is there not here, in addition to all the other arguments for it, an urgent call for enquiry as to the best means of forming commercial communication with those regions: and, seeing all the attempts hitherto made with this object, have signally failed for testing the practicability of what is now suggested?

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE KINGDOM OF BENIN.

AT the close of the last chapter reference is made to the supply of cotton-wool which might be procured from Central Africa through the channel indicated. And from the importance of the subject, though not exactly bearing on that now immediately before us, we may be allowed, to add a few words as to the procurability of the article likewise from the kingdom of Benin. This kingdom, it is believed, extends far back into the interior, but its principal town bearing the same name is situated a short distance only from the coast at the Bight of Benin. On a visit paid to it in 1838 by two surgeons of a palm oil ship belonging to the writer, then trading in the principal river of the kingdom, also called Benin, samples were procured of cotton wool of excellent quality, and also of yarn and cloth, spun and woven from it by the natives for native use; and it doubtless would be extensively produced and collected for exportation if encouragement were given by the opening of a market for its sale. The town, it is understood, has water communication by creek with the town of Lagos on the coast, where a British consul resides, and where a demand for cotton has of late years been maintained, through the spirited instrumentality of an individual merchant of Manchester. But from the isolated and degraded state in which the town of Benin was found in 1838, we think it exceedingly probable that the knowledge of this demand has not yet reached it. It was then in

a very wretched condition—shut up within itself in barbarism—having no intercourse apparently with the coast, although at one time it must have had commercial communication more or less direct with Portugal, as there are classes of its inhabitants who bear Portuguese appellations,—such as “Grandes” and “Phædoes,” the latter being a corruption of the Portuguese word for brokers or traders. The king, who had been a great dealer in Slaves, (which no doubt accounts for the debased state of the town,) affected much dignity, but granted the request of the visitors, namely, permission to open trade at Gatta, (a small village situated not far from the town, on a creek flowing into the Benin river,) and the Phædoes expressed their desire that our people would soon return again to trade with them.

It is important further to state, that Capt. BECROFT, in the course of exploring the Benin river two years subsequently, came upon extensive grassy plains, free of wood or bush, and in all respects suitable for being brought under cotton cultivation, and this at a distance not exceeding 100 miles from the entrance of the river, where there are British palm oil factories, and where British ships are at all times at anchor, trading in oil, and from whence as above stated, there is understood to be water communication, by creeks, with the market for cotton which has been opened at Lagos.

An opinion was entertained, in which the writer participated, that this river, from its magnitude, and its proximity to the mouths of the Niger, would furnish a channel of approach to the main body of the latter, by which the swamps of its Delta might be avoided; and Capt. BECROFT was instructed by the writer to endeavour to ascertain the truth or otherwise of this opinion, on his first ascent of the Niger in the *Ethiope* steamer; and he accordingly ascended



the river with that object. The desired approach was not found, but by the attempt the river was explored, and the plains above spoken of were discovered, which the natives on the river below call the Sooba country, and represent it as belonging to the king of Benin. For about 40 miles, the Benin is a fine bold river. Above this point it flows in two branches, which the *Ethiope* ascended some 40 miles on the one, and 60 miles on the other, including windings; both were found to be tortuous and narrow, but having a depth of not less than three fathoms of water, beautifully clear and transparent. At the points indicated, however, both branches were so choked up with equatic plants, as effectually to stop further progress. Their banks were richly studded with palm and other trees growing in great luxuriance; and it was at the extreme point reached on the southernmost, that the extensive plains referred to opened up to view. No population nor signs of population were visible on those plains, but no doubt there must be Negro labourers in plenty in a kingdom so large; and, now that the export of Negroes has ceased in these quarters, it may be inferred that the knowledge of a market for the sale of produce only is wanting to induce application to industrial pursuits. It is remarkable, that so little should be known of a country of so much importance, or of its king and people; the capital town being so near to the coast and so easy of access.



## APPENDIX.

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GENERAL REMARKS ON THE RIVER NIGER, ABRIDGED FROM A PAPER  
BY MR. KING, SURGEON OF THE STEAMER "ETHIOPE," WRITTEN  
AFTER HIS RETURN FROM THE ASCENT OF THAT RIVER, WITH  
CAPTAIN B McCROFT, IN 1845.

We shall now take a short General Review of the Niger, which pursues a course of upwards of 2000 miles from its sources to the sea; and, in so doing, we propose to divide it into three Sections:—the Lower, the Middle, and the Upper Niger, a division which will be found at once natural and convenient for illustration. According to this arrangement, we shall designate as the Lower Niger, that portion of the River from the sea to Iddah; as the Middle, that from Iddah to Busah; and from the latter town upwards, the Upper Niger.

The term Upper Niger we apply to that part of the River which MUNGO PARK is known to have navigated, from Sansanding (which he reached by an overland journey from the Gambia River) to Boussah, where his career was so unfortunately terminated—a distance of perhaps 1500 miles. Unhappily at the death of that celebrated traveller his papers were lost, and consequently we remain without any knowledge of the countries or people on the banks of this extensive range of the river.

On the Lower Niger, a divergent to the south-east, a little above Eboe, may be said to mark the commencement of what is called the "Delta of the Niger," and if we assume its base to extend along the coast from the Benin river to the Bonny river, it will enclose an area of several thousand square miles. The inhabitants of this region, who consist of several distinct races or tribes, are rude and barbarous; they are all of them Pagans and sunk in the most profound ignorance and horrid and degrading superstitions.

The appearance and character of the people improve as you advance into the interior. The first glimpses of this appear at Eboe, where the women in particular clothe better; and a stranger experiences a greater feeling of security in going on shore, being not only kindly received, but hospitably treated by the people. Above Eboe both banks of the river, up to Kiri, continue to be thickly covered with trees, but upon passing the latter place the country begins to open a little and to rise into hills of moderate elevation. It is still, however, everywhere studded with wood, by which any view into the interior is effectually intercepted, and this continues to be its character all the way to Iddah. On this part of the river no towns of any importance and but few villages are to be seen.

At Iddah, where our middle division of the river commences, a great change for the better is observable in the appearance and character of the people. They begin now to have more of the Arab features and less of the distinctive Negro countenance than the natives on the coast—are far more gentle in their dispositions and pleasing in their manners, and are in general well clothed with the cotton manufactures of the country. The better classes also profess the Mahomedan religion and have their resident *mallum* or priest.

A great change also takes place here in the aspect of the country. The valley of the Niger now opens wider and is bounded by hills which are but partially wooded and which, indeed, on the eastern side present a grassy surface, nearly altogether free from wood. Great beauty is also imparted to the scenery by the occurrence, for a short distance on both sides of the river, of precipitous cliffs of a coarse red sandstone, rising perpendicularly out of the water to the height of about 250 feet. On the summit of those cliffs, on the eastern bank, the town of Iddah is situated, from which a commanding and extensive view of the country is obtained. Looking from this eminence towards the confluence of the Chadda with the Niger, the view is particularly pleasing, presenting to the eye a number of tabulated hills and truncated cones, which form a picture of great novelty and beauty. The rocks in this extent (from Iddah to the confluence) are chiefly of a primitive nature; but, from changes effected upon them by physical causes, and from disintegration, they now form as it were such a chaos of ruins as almost to convey the idea of remnants of a former world.

From the confluence to Egga nearly, the country is a continued series of table-lands of about 1400 feet high, steep generally towards the river, but apparently sloping in other directions. Their summits, as viewed from the river, frequently present stony escarpments for considerable distances, unbroken in some places and in others resembling the ruins of ancient fortifications. Some fine pieces of alluvial land extend from the river towards their bases, when these are at any distance. Palms with other trees adorn their sides, and large villages are to be seen embosomed in many of their recesses. The people say that on these table-lands their principal farms or plantations are situated.

At Egga the country loses its tabulated appearance and again becomes undulating and wooded. This appearance it exhibits on the Egga side, with little exception, to beyond Rabbah, while the opposite bank soon begins to rise once more into mountains of considerable height—1500 to 2000 feet perhaps—and which extend nearly as far as to that city. Those mountains, with the exception of a few lofty cones, are of the anamorphous description, and are generally wooded even to their summits. At Rabbah, sandstone cliffs again present themselves, rising precipitously out of the river to about the same height as those at Iddah, to which they are very similar. The city of Rabbah partly overlooked those cliffs and commanded a very extensive and beautiful view of the surrounding districts. At this town our ascent of the river upon this occasion terminated, agreeably to our instructions, but while here, in 1840, we made an attempt to reach Boussah, in the hope of making the ascent of the river from the coast meet the termination of Mungo PARK's descent from its sources. Our progress, however, was stopped by rapids, near to Lever, (or Layabah,) which the *Ethiope's* steam power was unable to stem, and we were consequently obliged to return back to Rabbah, not having found any town of importance on this part of the river. The scenery here was quite equal to any we had seen on the river below.

The country along the greater part of this middle division of the Niger, is under the rule of the Felatahs, a people probably of Moorish descent, and of a very bold and enterprising character. They differ greatly in their habits and dispositions from the Negro part of the population, who are a remarkably mild and peaceably disposed race, and apparently are little concerned whether they be the governors of the

country, or the governed. The latter, however, evince a greater disposition for trade than the Felatahs, and it was with them only we transacted business. The acknowledged head or chief of the Felatahs resides at Sakatu, distant from Rabbah about ten days' journey, in a northerly direction. The present reigning sovereign, we were informed, is Alloh, a son of sultan Belloh, who died in 1834.

The only foreign intercourse which this part of Central Africa enjoys, is with the Arabs who come from Tripoli and Fezzan, and return again annually. These men travel the desert in companies or caravans for mutual protection, until they reach Kano, a Felatah town in the Houssah country, where they separate and spread into Borno, Yarribah, Nuffe, and other countries. They bring with them copper and brass, which the artisans of the country manufacture into ornaments and articles of domestic use. They likewise bring woollen cloths, carpets, knives, swords, beads, coral, small looking-glasses, salt, and unwrought silk,—taking back chiefly slaves, with cotton cloths, red and yellow dyed goat skins, musk, and other articles. Fearing, no doubt, the establishment of a direct trade from the coast, they endeavour to impress the minds of the natives with the notion, that Europeans will some day take possession of their country, and that on this account our visits ought not to be encouraged. From the kind and hospitable reception we have everywhere met with, however, and the desire evinced to trade with us, the efforts of those people on this point do not seem to have been attended with much success.

At and above Iddah, we consider the climate to be as healthy as that of any other tropical country. The heat (as was also the case in our ascent of 1840, when we were in the river more than six months) was at no period extreme, the thermometer (*Fahr.*) during the hottest period of the day seldom rising above 88° in the shade upon deck, or 85° in the cabin; exposed freely to the sun, it would rise to 110°, and sometimes to 114°, from one to two hours only however after the sun had passed his meridian. During the night, and towards morning, it generally sank to 76° or 74°, when it felt even very chilly. Rain, except when accompanied with squalls and tornadoes, was never very heavy or continued, and although it was near the middle of the rainy season when we left the coast on this ascent, we had scarcely anything but dry weather all the time we were in the river. According to the accounts of the

natives, the rains are never long continued in those parts ; so that the annual rise and inundations of the Niger depend but little, we should say, upon the quantity of rain which really falls upon these districts. As in the case of the Nile, the rise of the Niger is no doubt mainly the effect of the rains which periodically visit those mountains where it originates. This rise commences in July, goes on slowly until September, when it increases very rapidly, and reaches its greatest height about the latter end of that month, or the beginning of October. Its waters then decrease, at first as rapidly as they latterly rose, afterwards more gradually and slowly, until they attain their lowest point about (as we are told) the latter end of January.

The exploration of so extensive and interesting a part of the river as the upper division is most desirable, and as the countries along part of that great range are known to be mountainous, there is reason to hope that ores available for commerce might be found in them.







